BARBARIAN COMICS

NO. 1

SUN AND STEEL

Created By

HALE HAN

Book Layout/Design

Produced By

Bob Sidebottom

1ST EDITION

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SUN AND STEEL

by

HALE HAN

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Hey, what did you expect?
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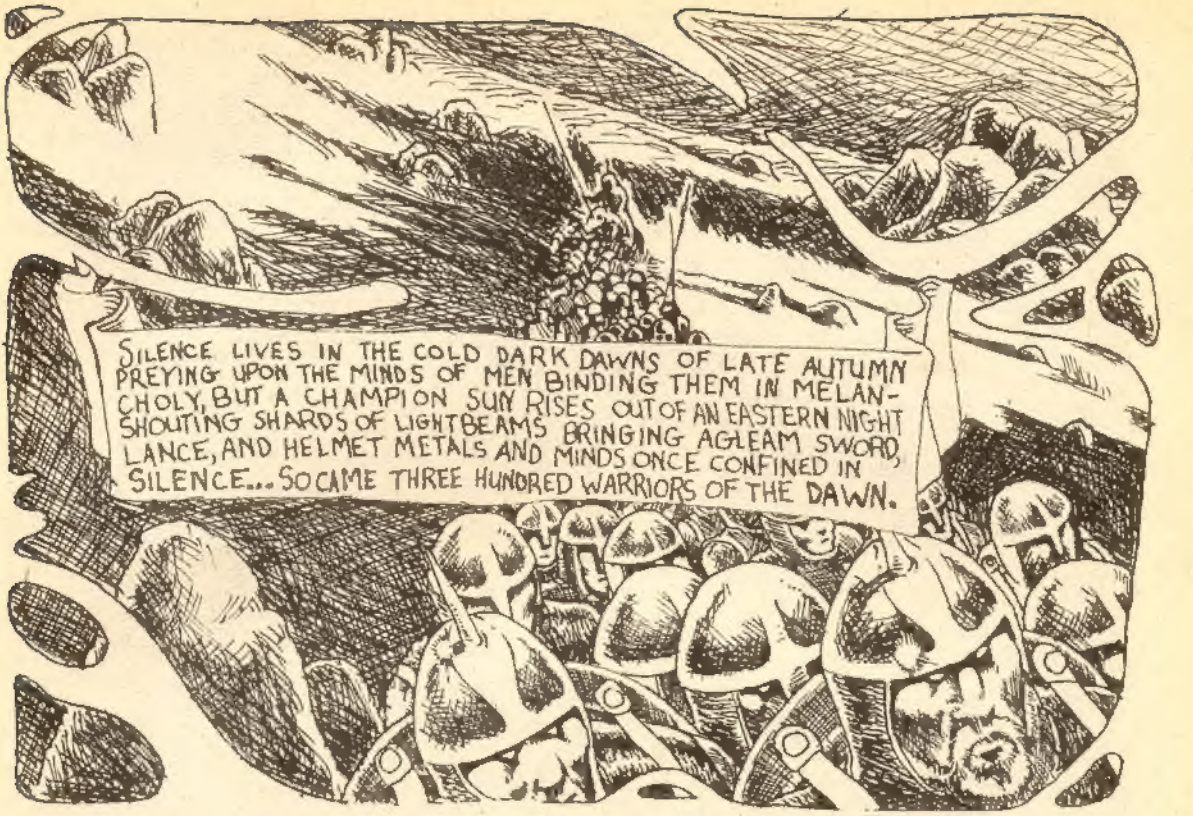
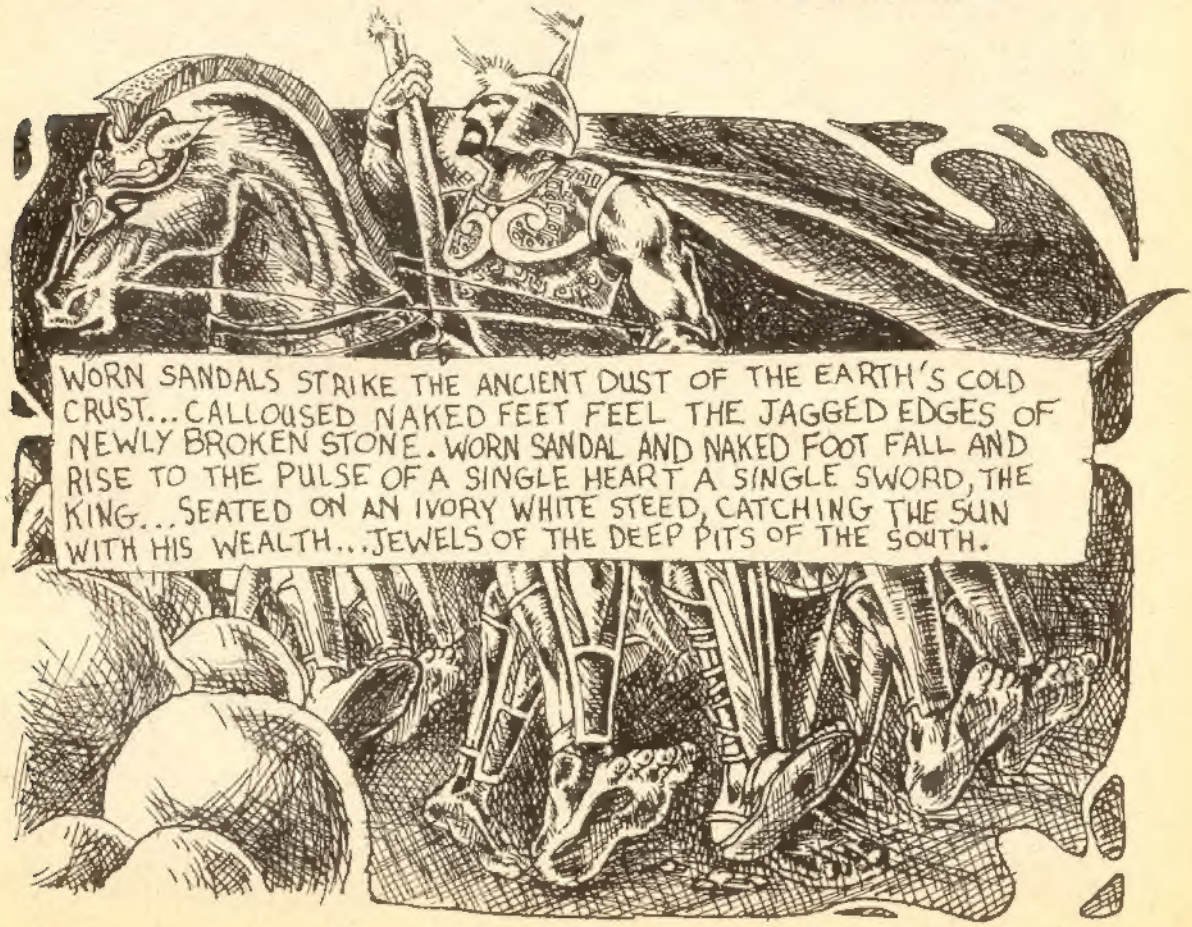
Sir Real

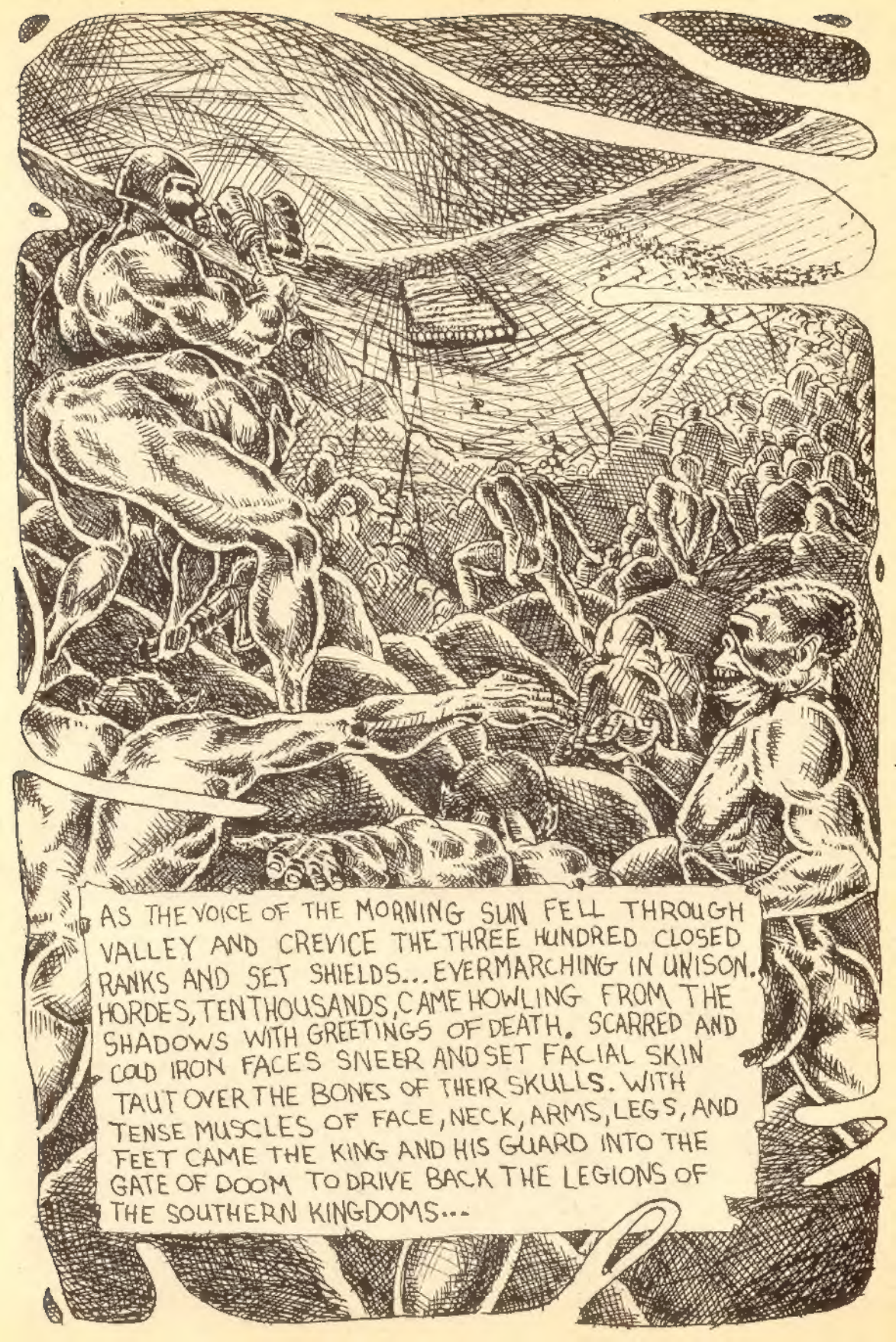
SUN AND STEEL

SUN AND STEEL

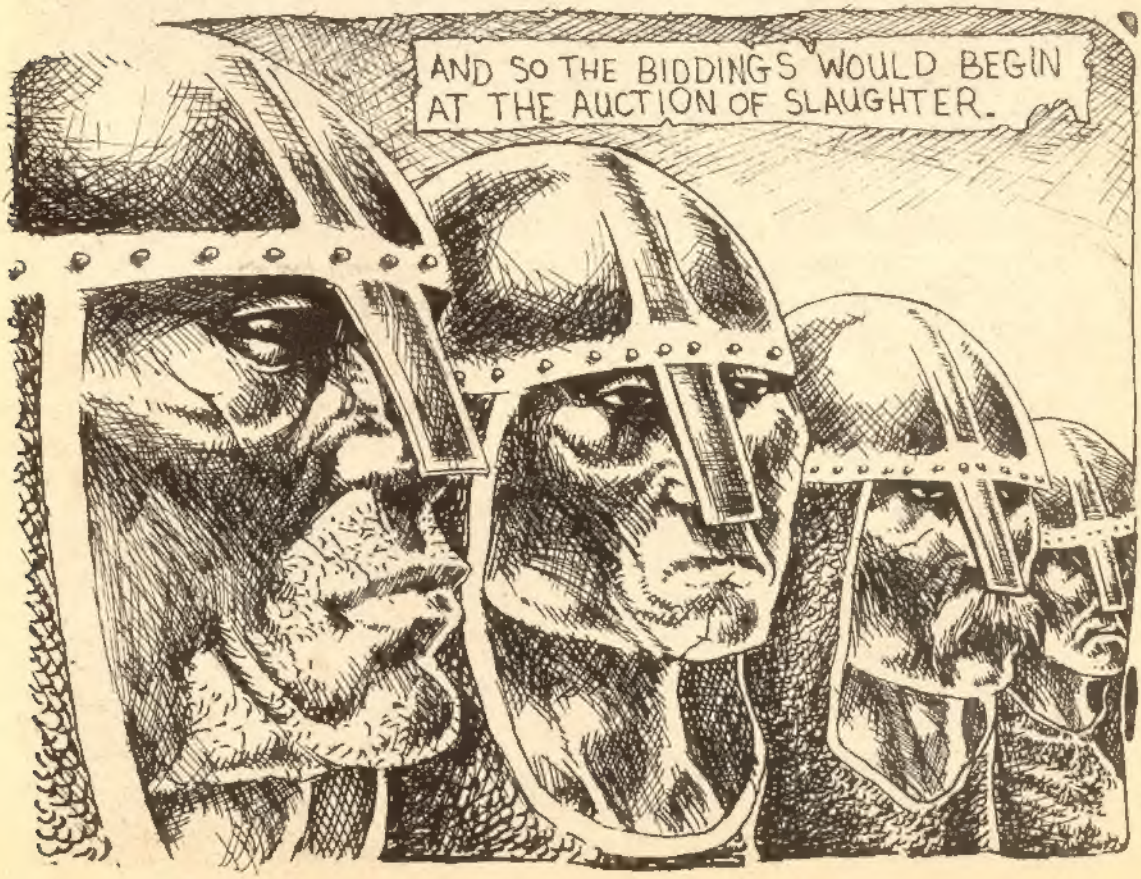
CHAPTER ONE

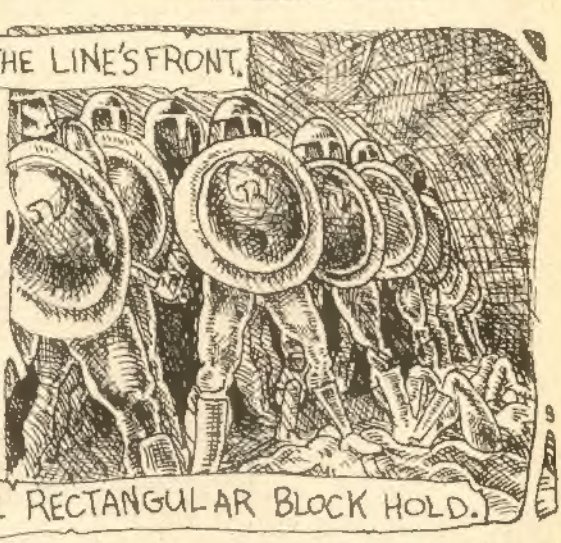

SILENCE LIVES IN THE COLD DARK DAWNS OF LATE AUTUMN PREYING UPON THE MINDS OF MEN BINDING THEM IN MELANCHOLY, BUT A CHAMPION SUN RISES OUT OF AN EASTERN NIGHT SHOUTING SHARDS OF LIGHT BEAMS BRINGING AGLEAM SWORD, LANCE, AND HELMET METALS AND MINDS ONCE CONFINED IN SILENCE... SO CAME THREE HUNDRED WARRIORS OF THE DAWN.


WORN SANDALS STRIKE THE ANCIENT DUST OF THE EARTH'S COLD CRUST... CALLOUSED NAKED FEET FEEL THE JAGGED EDGES OF NEWLY BROKEN STONE. WORN SANDAL AND NAKED FOOT FALL AND RISE TO THE PULSE OF A SINGLE HEART A SINGLE SWORD, THE KING... SEATED ON AN IVORY WHITE STEED, CATCHING THE SUN WITH HIS WEALTH... JEWELS OF THE DEEP PITS OF THE SOUTH.


AS THE VOICE OF THE MORNING SUN FELL THROUGH VALLEY AND CREVICE THE THREE HUNDRED CLOSED RANKS AND SET SHIELDS... EVER MARCHING IN UNISON. HORDES, TEN THOUSANDS, CAME HOWLING FROM THE SHADOWS WITH GREETINGS OF DEATH. SCARRED AND COLD IRON FACES SNEER AND SET FACIAL SKIN TAUT OVER THE BONES OF THEIR SKULLS. WITH TENSE MUSCLES OF FACE, NECK, ARMS, LEGS, AND FEET CAME THE KING AND HIS GUARD INTO THE GATE OF DOOM TO DRIVE BACK THE LEGIONS OF THE SOUTHERN KINGDOMS...

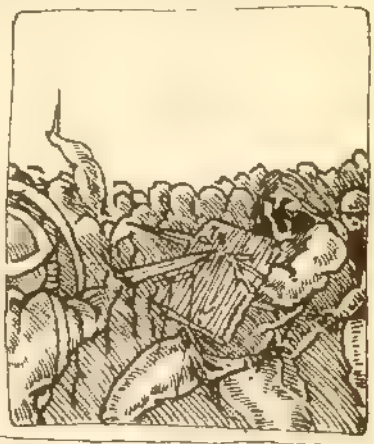
ROW UPON ROW OF MAN, SHIELD, AND SWORD MOVED DOWN THE MOUNTAIN SLOPE IN A RECTANGULAR BLOCK WALLED ON ALL SIDES WITH SHIELDS. EACH OF THE KING'S MEN FACED INTO THE VALLEY IN GRIMNESS WITHOUT THOUGHT OF MARCHING INTO HELL, BUT OF COMPETING IN THE SPORT OF WAR. PAIN, PITY, LIFE HELD NO MEANING WHEN BATTLE FILLED THEIR EYES ONLY THE EXHILARATION OF THE BATTLE WHEN A GOOD ARM AND A KEEN KNOWLEDGE OF THE SWORD WAS TRIUMPHANT. NO MINUTE LIVED PASSED THE NEXT AND NO MAN WHO FOUGHT EVER LOOKED ON THE MORROW.



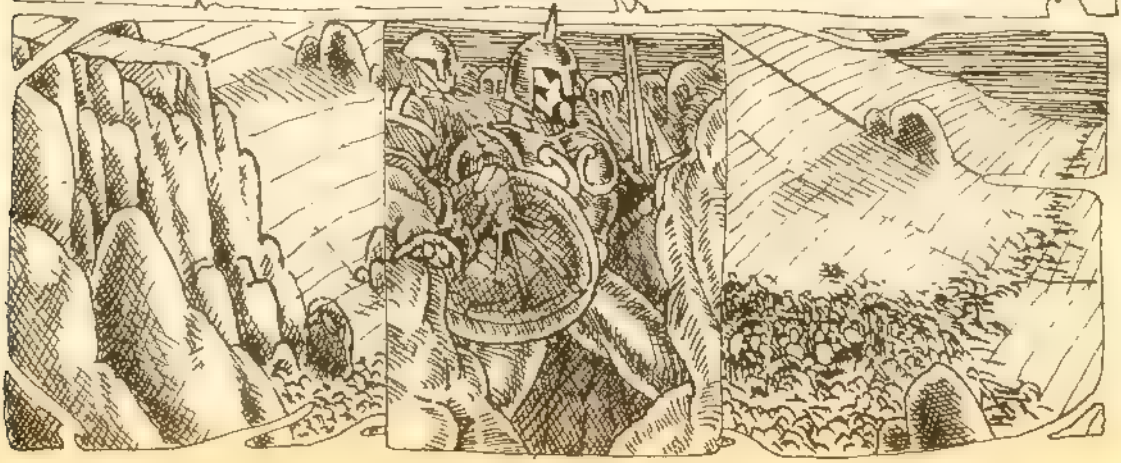


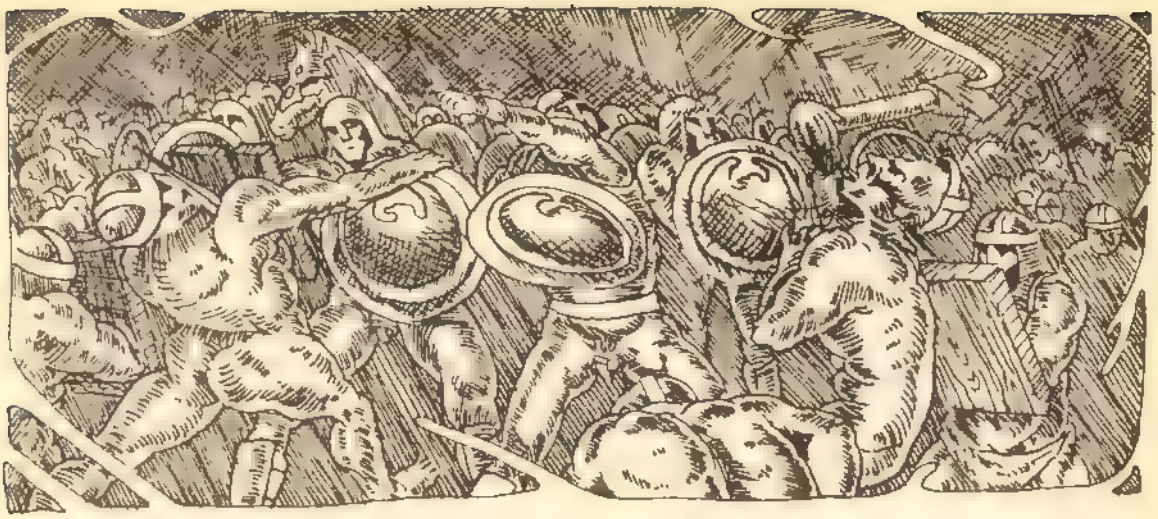
THE DAY FADES AND THE NIGHT COMES, BUT BLOOD CONTINUES TO FLOW UNTIL THE SHEER SLOPES RUN RED. IN ONE DAY THE LEADERS OF THE TEN THOUSAND HAVE SPENT THEIR MEN AS PENNIES TO A DOLLAR. ONE HUNDRED MEN TO OBTAIN ONE OF THE THREE HUNDRED. FIVE THOUSAND LAY SLAIN ON THE EARTH AT THE END OF THE SECOND DAY; AND ONE HUNDRED NINETY-NINE STILL HELD THE BLOCK WHEN DAWN ARRIVED ON THE THIRD DAY. THE BLOOD FLOWED ON.

THE EARTH REVOLVES, SPINNING VERY MINUTE BEINGS THROUGH THE GREAT VOID STARTLING THEIR INTELLIGENCE WITH STARK CONTRAST. FROM THE NIGHT IS BORN THE SUN-- DAY; AND FROM LIFE IS BORN DEATH. YET, HOW LITTLE IT IS THEY EXPERIENCE IN THE GREAT UNIVERSE TO MAKE SUCH UNIVERSAL OBSERVATIONS FROM THE LITTLE PIECE OF EXISTENCE WHICH IS UNIQUELY THEIR'S, BUT SURELY WE MINUTE BEINGS MUST CHOOSE --- DECIDE WHAT IS TOLERABLE AND INTOLERABLE --- DECIDE BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL. ONE-HUNDRED-TWENTY-SEVEN STILL STAND.

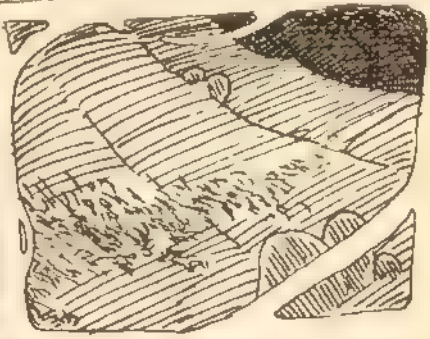


ON AND ON GOES THE FIERCE STRUGGLE WITH NO ELEMENT OF TIME EXCEPT THE TIRING OF A SWORD ARM. EVEN A KING MUST JOIN THE FRAY IF THE TOGETHERNESS OF HIS COMMAND IS TO BE MAINTAINED. AMIDST HIS TIRELESS VIGIL OVER THE BORDERS OF THE BLOCK HE RETIRES HIS MOUNT TO RELIEVE A TIRED, WORN SOLDIER AT THE FRONT. ONLY FIFTY REMAIN TO QUELL THE REMAINING FIVE HUNDRED OF THE TEN-THOUSAND. EVENING APPROACHES OMINOUSLY...





NINE SWORDS DROP EVEN AS THE SUN FALLS AWAY. THE BATTLE IS ENDED. LEGEND ALREADY FLOATS ON THE WINDY GUSTS OF THE EARTH'S WINDSWEPT HISTORY, BRINGING GRAINS OF BLOOD-COATED DUST TO EVERY CORNER OF THE FLOATING CONTINENTS AND FINALLY OUT TO THE SEA TO BE DISSOLVED AWAY. HEAVY ARMS CHAINED INWARD TOWARD THE EARTH BY GRAVITY HAD THEIR STRENGTH-SAPPED WHEN THE MIND'S PURPOSE CEASED HAVING BEEN ATTAINED. SLUMPED AND LONG PAST SWEAT THE NINE STOOD IN THE BLACKNESS TIRED TO DEATH. NINE CUT AND BRUISED AND BEATEN, BLEEDING BODIES SHIVER IN THE ICY GLOOM.

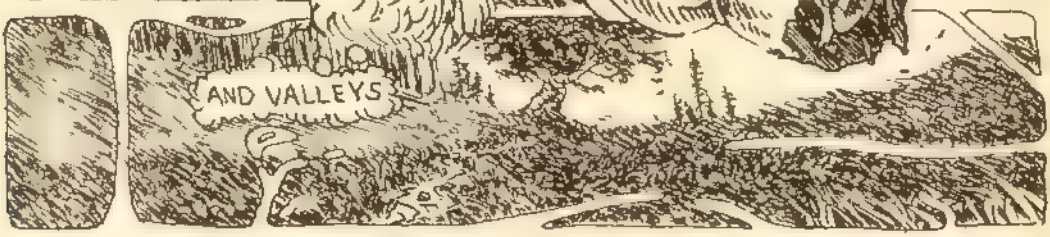


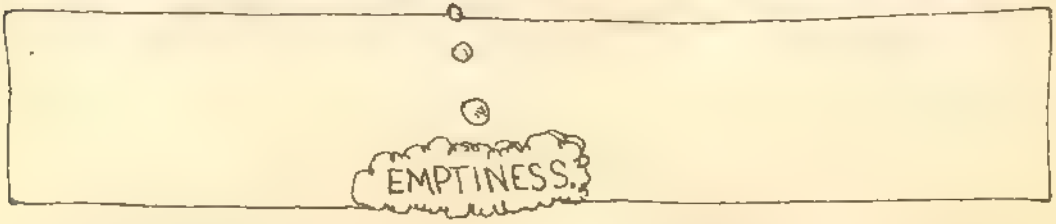
UNDER A CRIMSON MOON OF THE FOURTH DAY IN MIDNIGHT MORNING SILENCE CAME AGAIN, BUT NINE STOUT HEARTS HAILED THE KING FOR WHAT DEEDS HAD BEEN ACCOMPLISHED THESE DAYS GONE. THE HAIL SOON ECHOED AWAY. SILENCE REIGNED OR DID IT ?
SPLINTERING..
BONES.
DEMONS COME FOR THE DEAD!!!
...OR THE LIVING

MAN AND APE MAN.
..FALL; AND THE SILENCE OF...
...MORNING TRULY COMES.

STEPPING LIGHTLY OVER STIFF CORPSES OF THE TEN-THOUSAND PLUS THREE HUNDRED, A ROBED FIGURE COMES TO THE SCENE OF THE PREVIOUS NIGHT'S HORROR.
AH! GIANT FRIEND YOU'VE DONE GOOD!
THE REMAINING NINE ARE NOW DEAD!!!
YOUR LIFE WAS WORTH IT.
A KING'S HEAD IS A VERY VALUABLE HEAD INDEED AND SUCH A SHATTERED BODY NEEDS NOTHING SO VALUABLE.
HEH!
HEH!

WITH THE VANISHING SPECTRE HOLDING THE HEAD OF THE KING THE WORLD SPINS AND FALLS INSIDE THE ONE ARMED MAN'S HEAD. HIS BODY LOSES BALANCE AND TOPPLES.





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7 - 20¢
(spoof by Gary Arlington)

SUN AND STEEL

CHAPTER TWO

Another stupid intentionally blank page!

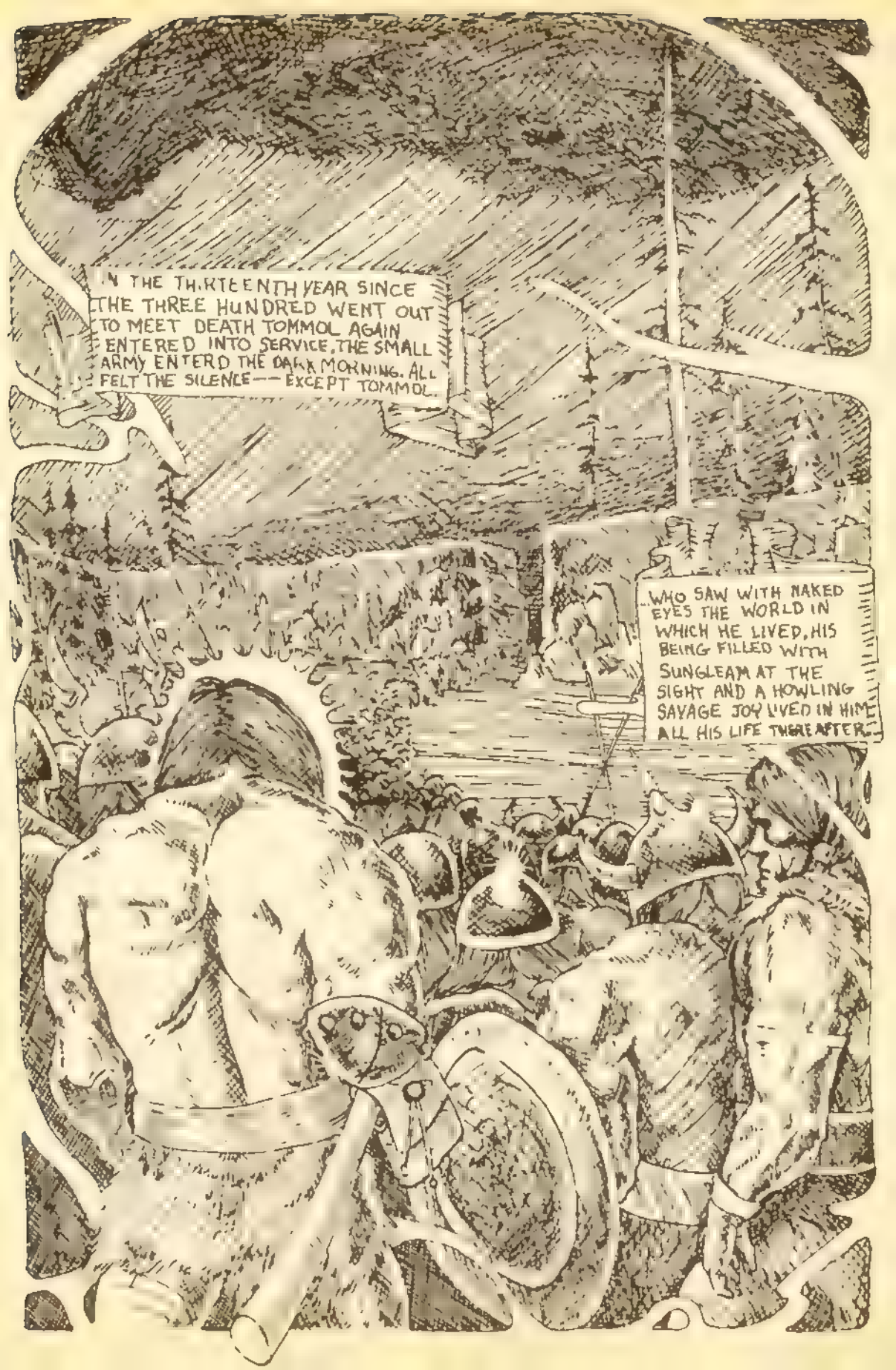
These guys must have been hurting for filler material.

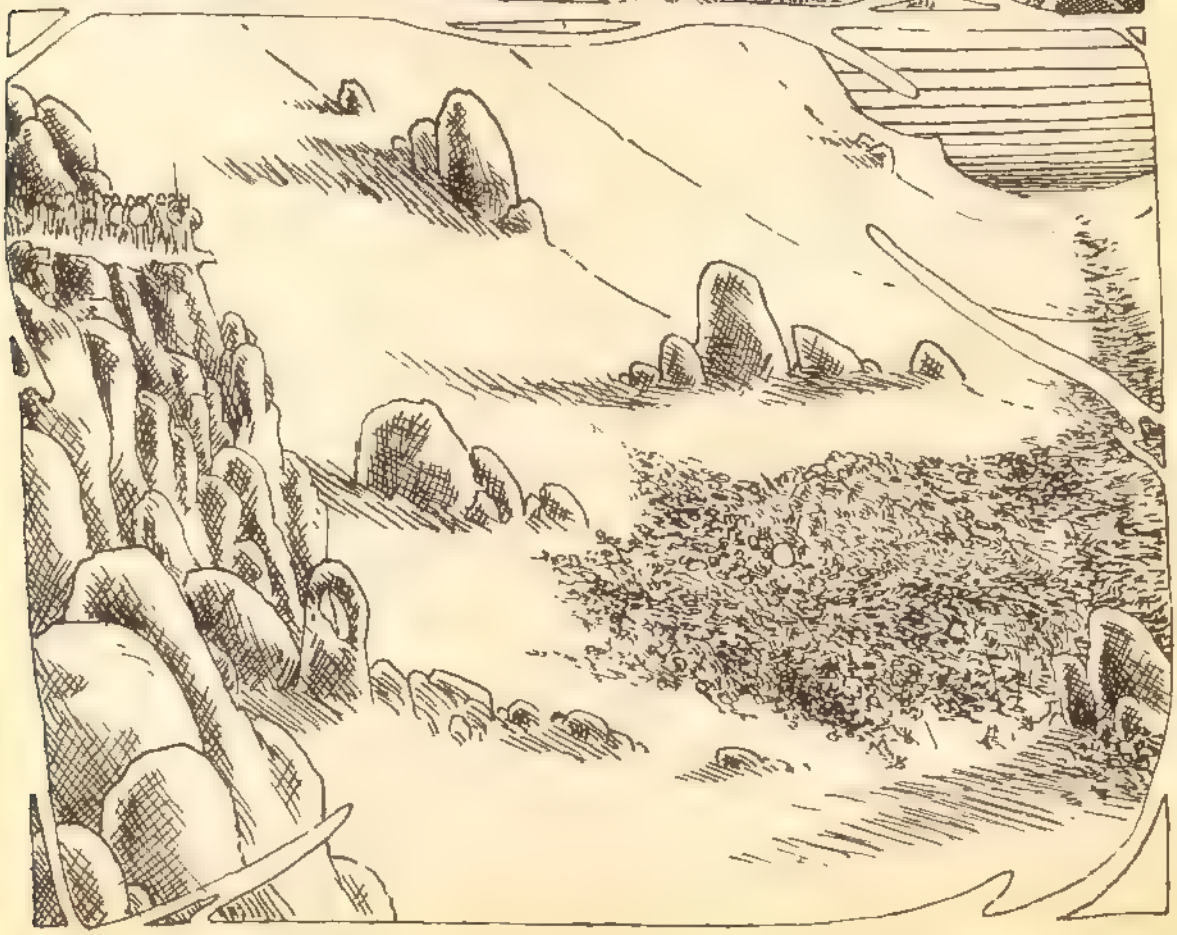
Sir Real

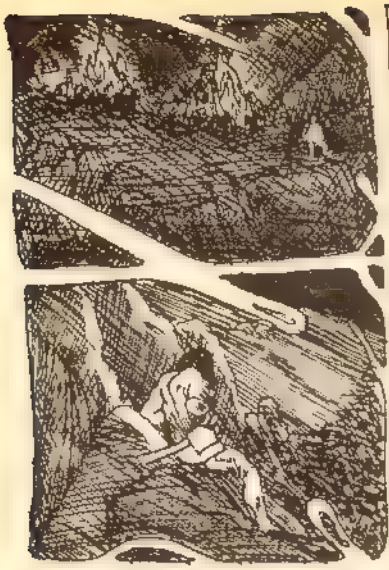
MAN WITH NO ARM HAVE YOU A TONGUE? SEASONS HAVE PASSED AND YOU ARE SAFE. WHERE EVER YOU BATTLE LAY DOWN YOUR ARMS AND RETURN TO YOUR BODY.

THOR! I'M IN VALHALLA!!! COME HERE LASS! GIVE ME MORE!!!
EMPTINESS BECOMES FILLED WITH THE YOUNG RESCUER AS THE MAN WITH ONE ARM DOES RETURN AFTER MONTHS IN SHOCK.
JUST LET ME GRAB YOU HERE...
ARRGHH—MY ARM... THE DREAM... THE BATTLE...
A MAN WITH BUT ONE ARM IS SURELY USE LESS. BETTER HAD I DIED AND SEEN THE FABLED HALLS OF VALHALLA.
BUT WHO ARE YOU? WHO WOULD TAKE IN A WANDERING MADMAN?
YOU WILL KNOW SOON ENOUGH.
NOW COME DOWN AND I WILL SHOW YOU A REASON TO LIVE.

YEARS PASS. TOMMOL SITS BROODING IN A DARK INN WHILE THE HOURS DRAIN AWAY. MIDNIGHT COMES AND GOES.
GLAK
GLAK
SUN AND STEEL. MY HEART REJOICES TO THE SIGHT. AMONG THOSE NORTHMEN IS MY CALLING...
...MY TRADE...
...LIFE.

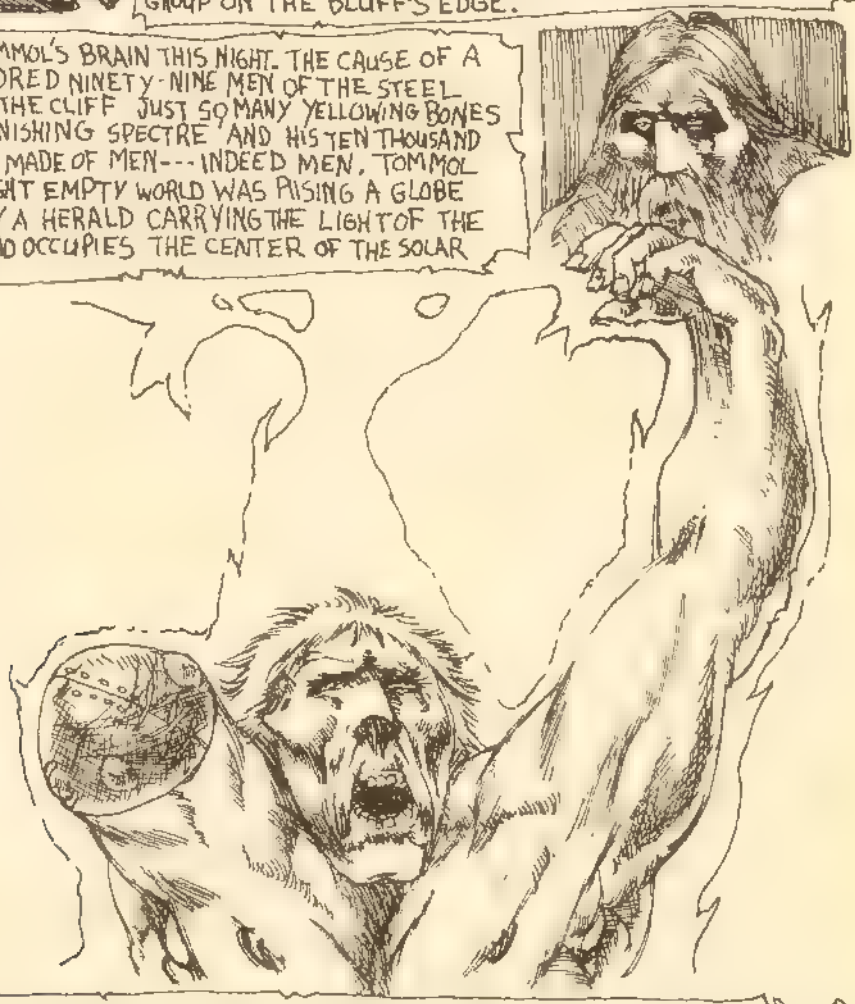

N THE THIRTEENTH YEAR SINCE THE THREE HUNDRED WENT OUT TO MEET DEATH TOMMOL AGAIN ENTERED INTO SERVICE. THE SMALL ARMY ENTERD THE DARK MORNING. ALL FELT THE SILENCE — EXCEPT TOMMOL.
WHO SAW WITH NAKED EYES THE WORLD IN WHICH HE LIVED, HIS BEING FILLED WITH SUNGLEAM AT THE SIGHT AND A HOWLING SAVAGE JOY LIVED IN HIM ALL HIS LIFE THEREAFTER.



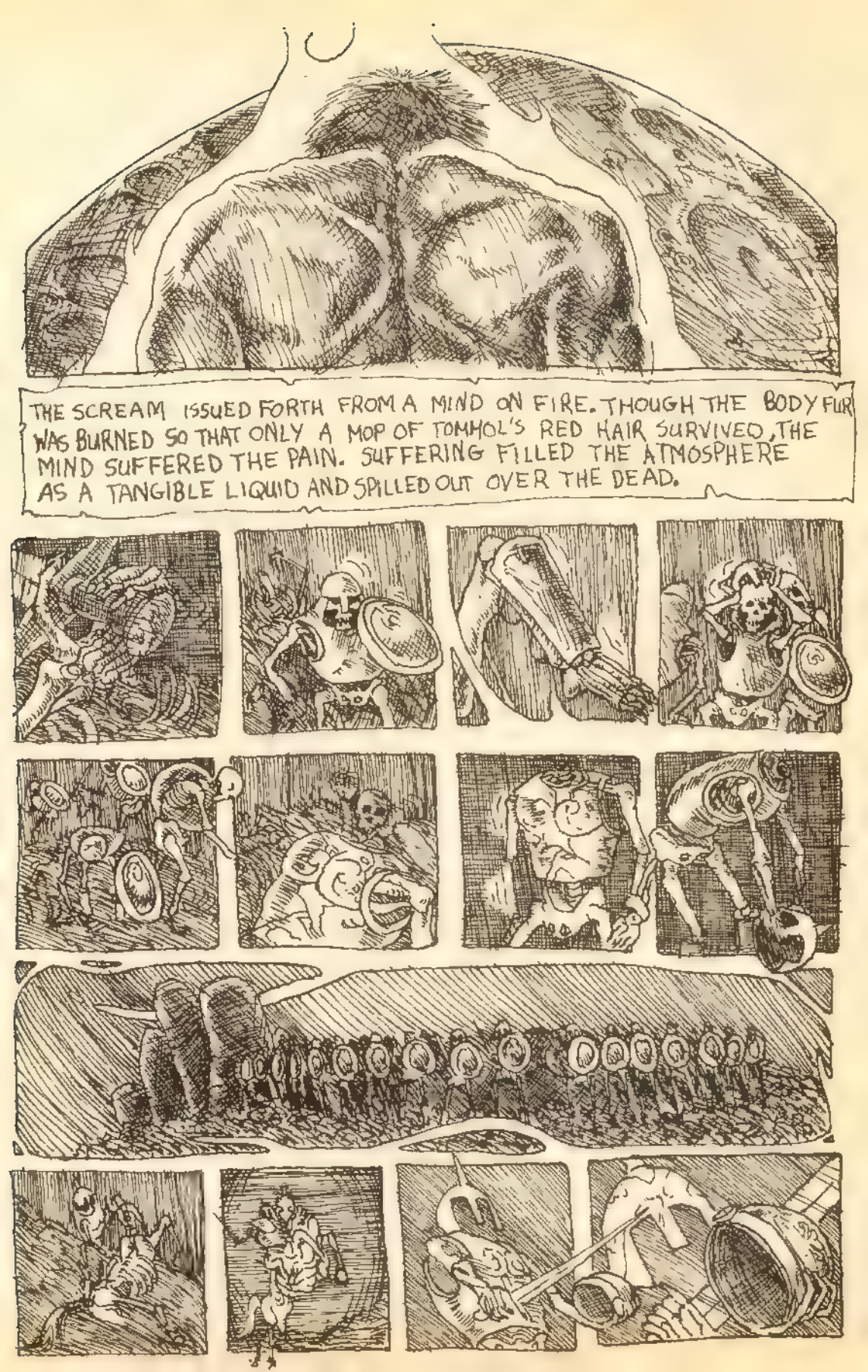


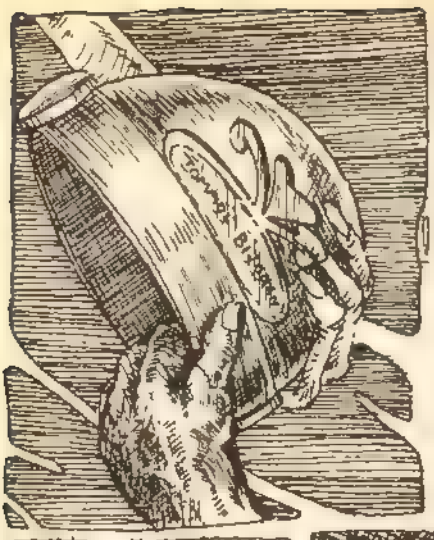
THE DAY GIVES BIRTH TO THE NIGHT AND MEN BUILD TINY SUNS TO SURVIVE IN THE BLACKNESS WHICH PRESSES IN SO HEAVILY, BUT FOR THEM WITH SUNS KINDLED IN THEIR MIND AND BODY THE BLACK UNKNOWN IS HAVEN AND THEY ARE HEROES. AS THE STAR-SUN SOL AND STARS OF THE VASTNESS FILL IN BLACK CORNERS OF THE IMMENSE NIGHT SO DO HEROES BRING LIGHT TO THE UNKNOWN. WHERE THERE IS LIGHT AND SUNS ALREADY DWELL THEY ARE NOT. WHERE LIGHT CAN BE SHED THERE HEROES WILL DWELL. OUT IN THE NIGHT GASES CONVERGE AND A SUN IS ABORNING FOR ONLY A DARK EVIL MAY GIVE GOODNESS A CHANCE TO BURST FORTH FOR TWELVE BILLIONS OF YEARS UNTIL DECADENCE CREEPS IN AND GOOD DWINDLES INTO BLACKNESS. MORALS CANNOT EXIST WITHOUT VICES. VIRTUALLY NOTHING EXISTS FOR TO WEIGH EXISTENCE... THE CAMP WAS PERCHED ON THE BLUFF OVERLOOKING THE DEPRESSION OF DEATH. THE CONVERGING SUN SITS AWAY FROM THE GROUP ON THE BLUFF'S EDGE.

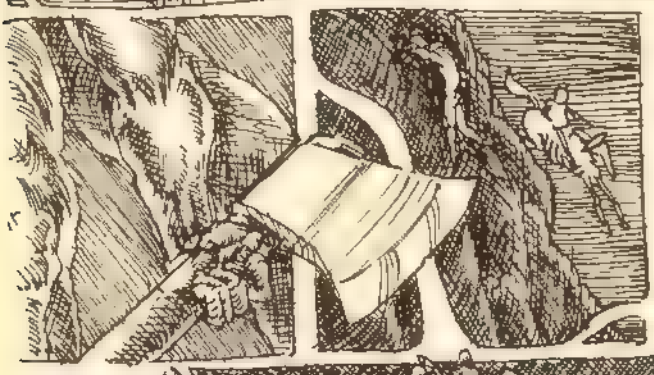
MEMORIES FILLED TOMMOL'S BRAIN THIS NIGHT. THE CAUSE OF A KING AND TWO-HUNDRED NINETY-NINE MEN OF THE STEEL SWORD LAY 'NEATH THE CLIFF JUST SO MANY YELLOWING BONES CUT DOWN BY A VANISHING SPECTRE AND HIS TEN THOUSAND PUPPETS. PUPPETS MADE OF MEN---INDEED MEN, TOMMOL KNEW. IN THE LIGHT EMPTY WORLD WAS RISING A GLOBE OF PALE LIGHT ONLY A HERALD CARRYING THE LIGHT OF THE RAGING BEING WHO OCCUPIES THE CENTER OF THE SOLAR SYSTEM.



THE MOON RACED TO ITS ZENITH AS TOMMOL RETURNED FROM THE PAST. UPWARD HE STARTED FROM ANGUISHED MEMORIES. AS THE MOON REACHED MIDNIGHT NOON ETHEREAL FIRE SET ABLAZE HIS BODY FUR AND TRAPPINGS. THE ONE ARM MAN SCREAMED ONE TERRIBLE LASTING SCREAM WHICH ECHOED THE LENGTH OF THE VALLEY AND FROM THE SURROUNDING MOUNTAINS HIGHEST PEAKS. NAKED NOW TOMMOL STOOD ARM LIMP AT HIS SIDE... HIS EYES BOTTOMLESS POOLS OF BLUE WATER...

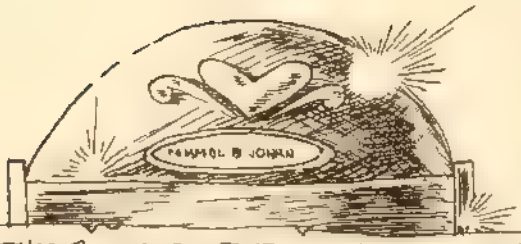

THE SCREAM ISSUED FORTH FROM A MIND ON FIRE. THOUGH THE BODY FUR WAS BURNED SO THAT ONLY A MOP OF TOMHOL'S RED HAIR SURVIVED, THE MIND SUFFERED THE PAIN. SUFFERING FILLED THE ATMOSPHERE AS A TANGIBLE LIQUID AND SPILLED OUT OVER THE DEAD.





THE ARMY ON THE BLUFF SLEPT AWAY WHILE THE ONCE AGAIN THREE HUNDRED WAITED IN THE CHILL AND SILENCE OF AN AUTUMN MORN. THE LIVING OF THE WORLD SLEPT UNDER THE COAT OF NIGHT WHILE TOMMOL AND THE TWO HUNDRED NINETY-NINE KEPT A VIGIL. THE SUN ROSE IN TOMMOL'S EYE AND INTO THE SKULL SOCKETS OF THE HELMETED SKULLS. RUSTED SHIELDS AND METALS BECAME ALIVE WITH SUN... SO FADED THREE HUNDRED WARRIORS OF THE DAWN.

THE END OF THIS SAGA IS NOW, BUT ENDINGS ARE ONLY BEGINNINGS. THE KNIT OF A CLOTH HAS ONLY CONNECTIONS. A STITCH IS ENDING AND BEGINNING. EXISTENCE IS A CLOTH IN WHICH EACH STITCH ENABLES ANOTHER. YET THE CLOTH OF EXISTENCE HAS ALREADY BEEN SEWN. TRY AS BEINGS MIGHT TO CHOOSE, BEINGS ARE BUT THREAD PULLED BY THE NEEDLE...FOUL CURSES RING OUT FROM THE MIND-VOICES OF THE SKELETON ARMY CONSUMED BY THE DAWNING MORN'S SUN..... SET IN THE NEW BORN SKY LOOMS THE IMAGE OF THE ENTITY CURSED. A SKULL WITH WITHERED FLESH DANGLES AT THE END OF THE CURSED'S REACH. THRICE MORE LASH OUT POISONED CURSES. BONES EMPTY OF MARROW ARE MOVED... SKELETONS STRIPPED OF FLESH... STRIPPED OF LOCOMOTING MUSCLES CLACK IN RHYTHM TO A SINGLE PULSE, A SINGLE HEART... NOT THE KING'S, BUT TOMMOL'S HEART BEATS OUT THEIR RATE OF MARCH. TOMMOL LEADS THE DEAD TO FIND THE 'CURSED' ONE ...TO FIND THE 'CURSED' ONE GOES TO THE..."HALL OF KINGS"...



DEEP IN THE RECESSES OF TOMMOL'S MIND, FAR FROM THE COMICAL, STIFF GRISLY MARCH OF THE SKELETONS ABOUT HIM, ARE THE FROZEN HINTERLANDS AND SHORT, DARK, STORMY DAYS. WIND-RUSHING TREETOPS FRAME A CLEAR STAR FLECKED NIGHT. WITH SUN IN HIS EYE HE RECALLS...A SMALL BOY OF TEN AND A WOMAN...

...ALL FADING, FADING AWAY TO AN END...

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